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ABSTRACT

In fall 1984, a nationwide study was conducted to determine the impact of undocumented aliens on two-year colleges. Surveys were mailed to presidents of 1,195 two-year colleges, requesting information on the number of undocumented aliens currently enrolled at the colleges, their nations of origin, their admission status, special modifications or provisions made for these students, special services offered, state or federal financial reimbursement practices, and perceptions of the advantages or disadvantages of the enrollment of undocumented students. Study findings, based on a 54% response rate, included the following: (1) 9% of the responding schools allowed undocumented aliens to enroll, 86% did not allow their enrollment, and 5% did not know if enrollment was allowed; (2) of the 58 institutions allowing undocumented aliens to enroll, 46% currently had undocumented aliens enrolled; (3) most undocumented alien students were from Mexico; (4) 16 of the 27 colleges with undocumented alien students were in California; (5) the most frequently cited admission status was high school graduate from a United States high school; (6) 8 of the 27 colleges that enrolled undocumented aliens listed special modifications in admissions requirements or standards; (7) no special provisions for financial aid were made; (8) 9 colleges had special educational provisions for undocumented alien students; (9) no other special services were given by any college; and (10) 10 colleges indicated no state reimbursement was received for teaching undocumented alien students. (LAL)

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UNDOCUMENTED ALIENS AND THE NATION'S TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

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UNDOCUMENTED ALIENS AND THE NATION'S TWO-YEAR COLLEGES

Undocumented -- or illegal -- aliens have been for some time a significant factor in the operation of public elementary and secondary schools in some states, especially those bordering on Mexico. On July 22, 1980, in U.S. Federal District Court in Texas, Judge Woodrow Seals declared Section 21.031 of the Texas Education Code unconstitutional; that section restricted children of undocumented aliens from attending Texas public schools. The effect of that decision was to affirm the Constitutional right to an education regardless of immigration status.

At the university level, illegal aliens are also a controversial category of students in some states. Superior Court Judge Ken M. Kawaichi ruled in Oakland, California that if illegal aliens complied with the University of California's one-year residency rule, they must be allowed to pay the fee charged residents. Similar concerns have been investigated in other states concerning illegal aliens and their children as they impact public schools or universities. Nothing, however, could be found in the literature concerning the impact, if any, on the nation's two-year colleges. This report contains the findings of a study designed to assess such an impact.

The Study

During the fall semester of 1984, a survey instrument was mailed to each of the two-year colleges listed in the Community, Technical.

and Junior College Directory. 1984. published by the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges. Instruments were mailed to the presidents of 1195 institutions across the fifty states with the request that the president have the appropriate member of his/her staff to respond to 10 items designed to gather, data concerning the enrollment of undocumented alien students.[1]

Of the 1195 instruments mailed. 646 were returned for a return rate of 54.06 per cent. Such percentage return on a mail-out survey indicates a considerable interest in the subject. Table 1 shows a summary of the instruments mailed and returned by state and by category of institution: public college; independent. non-profit college; church-related college; and independent, profit college. The largest return rate was 55 per cent from public colleges followed by 48 per cent from church-related colleges; 45 per cent from independent, profit colleges; and 42 per cent from independent. non-profit colleges.

The Results of the Study

The first item on the survey instrument was. "Does your college allow undocumented aliens to enroll?" From the 646 returned instruments. the responses were: Yes. 58; No. 558; Don't Know, 30. Table 2 shows the responses to this item by category of college.

Respondents from the 58 institutions which allowed undocumented alien students to enroll were asked to respond to nine additional items of information. Findings for each item are presented by totals

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[1]This study was supported by an Organized Research Grant from Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas.

Table 1

SUMMARY OF INSTRUMENTS MAILED AND RETURNED

STATE	NUMBER MAILED	NUMBER RETURNED	PUBLIC COLLEGES MAILED	PUBLIC COLLEGES RETURNED	IND. N.P. COLLEGES MAILED	IND. N.P. COLLEGES RETURNED	CHURCH-RELATED COLLEGES MAILED	CHURCH-RELATED COLLEGES RETURNED	IND. PROFIT COLLEGES MAILED	IND. PROFIT COLLEGES RETURNED
AL	47	24	44	23	2	1	1	0	0	0
AK	11	5	10	4	0	0	1	0	0	0
AZ	21	10	20	9	1	1	0	0	0	0
AR	12	8	10	7	0	0	2	1	0	0
CA	114	62	107	59	2	0	3	2	2	1
CO	17	13	17	13	0	0	0	0	0	0
CT	19	13	17	12	2	1	0	0	0	0
DE	4	3	3	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
FL	38	21	34	20	2	0	0	0	0	0
GA	24	16	16	12	1	1	6	2	1	1
HI	7	5	7	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
ID	3	3	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	0
IL	57	27	52	26	3	0	2	1	0	0
IN	15	5	14	4	0	0	1	0	0	0
IA	25	12	23	12	1	0	1	0	0	0
KS	25	17	21	14	0	0	3	2	1	1
KY	19	9	14	6	1	1	4	2	0	0
LA	5	3	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
ME	8	2	8	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
MD	20	11	19	10	1	1	0	0	0	0
MA	32	16	17	9	13	5	2	2	0	0
MI	34	17	32	16	1	0	1	1	0	0
MN	26	12	22	11	1	0	3	1	0	0
MS	20	11	17	9	0	0	3	2	0	0
MO	20	8	15	7	3	1	2	0	0	0
MI	6	4	4	3	2	1	0	0	0	0
NE	15	7	14	7	0	0	1	0	0	0
NV	4	1	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
NH	8	4	7	3	1	1	0	0	0	0
NJ	18	11	18	11	0	0	0	0	0	0
NM	16	10	16	10	0	0	0	0	0	0
NY	58	27	46	22	10	4	1	0	1	1
NC	65	40	57	36	0	0	8	4	0	0

SUMMARY OF INSTRUMENTS MAILED AND RETURNED (CONT.)

STATE	NUMBER MAILED	NUMBER RETURNED	PUBLIC MAILED	COLLEGES RETURNED	IND. N.P. MAILED	COLLEGES RETURNED	CHURCH-RELATED MAILED	COLLEGES RETURNED	IND. PROFIT MAILED	COLLEGES RETURNED
ND	7	5	6	4	1	1	0	0	0	0
OH	57	33	55	32	1	0	1	1	0	0
OK	18	11	15	10	0	0	3	1	0	0
OR	15	7	14	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
PA	30	12	17	7	8	4	2	1	3	0
RI	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SC	24	17	21	14	0	0	3	3	0	0
SD	3	2	0	0	2	1	1	1	0	0
TN	20	11	14	8	1	1	5	2	0	0
TX	71	50	67	48	0	0	4	2	0	0
UT	5	2	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
VT	4	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
VA	35	14	34	14	1	0	0	0	0	0
WA	27	19	27	19	0	0	0	0	0	0
WV	12	7	10	6	1	1	1	0	0	0
WI	45	18	45	18	0	0	0	0	0	0
WY	7	3	7	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	1195	646	1053	582	65	27	66	32	11	5

for all responding institutions.

Table 2

Are Undocumented Aliens Allowed to Enroll?

Category of College	Yes Number	%	No Number	%	Don't Know Number	%
Public	53	9	499	86	30	5
Church-Related	1	3	31	97		
Independent. Non-Profit	4	15	23	85		
Independent. Profit			5	100		
Total	58	9	558	86	30	5

Item 1. Are undocumented alien students currently enrolled in your college? If yes. how many? Of the 58 responding institutions. 27 (46%) replied affirmatively; 26 (45%) replied negatively; and 5 (9%) indicated that it was unknown at the time. Of the 27 colleges which indicated that undocumented alien students were currently enrolled. 16 colleges were in California, 2 colleges were in Oklahoma, and one college each in Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Texas. While 9 of these colleges stated that they did now know how many undocumented alien students were enrolled, the remaining 18 reported 417 students enrolled.

Item 2. From which nations do your currently enrolled undocumented alien students come? By far, most of the undocumented alien students were from Mexico (approximately 225). The next largest number of students were from Viet Nam (approximately 110). Other known sources of undocumented alien students were Korea, Iran, Saudi Arabia. Central American countries, Poland, England. Italy, China, Jamaica, Scotland, Switzerland, Brazil, West Indies, Germany, Cape Verde, Canada, and Portugal.

Item 3. What was the admission status of currently enrolled undocumented alien students? The most frequently cited admission status was that of high school graduate from a U. S. high school (12 colleges reporting). Other admission statuses, according to frequency of reporting, follow:

High school graduate from another nation (6 colleges)

Individual approval (6 colleges)

High school equivalency test (4 colleges)

Transfer from another 2-yr. college in U.S. (2 colleges)

Transfer from a 4-yr. college in U.S. (2 colleges)

Transfer from a 2-yr. college in another nation (1 college)

Transfer from a 4-yr. college in another nation (1 college)

Item 4. Do you make any special modifications in admissions requirements or standards for undocumented alien students? Eight of the 27 colleges with currently enrolled undocumented alien students listed modifications. Those eight colleges represented seven different states. Some of the modifications eased requirements (transcripts waived, no high school graduation required, and special individual admission interview conducted), and some of them tightened requirements (pay higher tuition than residents and prove ability to use the English language).

Item 5. Are special provisions for financial aid made available to undocumented alien students? No college reported special provisions for financial aid to undocumented alien students. Some colleges indicated that financial aid would be denied to undocumented alien students even when available to other students.

Item 6. Does your college have any special provisions in your educational program to meet the needs of undocumented alien students? Nine colleges reported having special educational provisions for undocumented alien students. Special classes to assist in mastering the English language were reported by six colleges in five different states. Two colleges provided tutors to undocumented alien students. Two colleges provided self-paced classes in reading and other content areas.

Item 7. Does your college provide any other types of special services to undocumented alien students? No college reported other special services to undocumented alien students.

Item 8. Does your college receive equal reimbursement (from state, federal, or other appropriate source) for credit hours taught to undocumented alien students as for credit hours taught to other students? Ten colleges from five different states indicated that no state reimbursement was received for the teaching of undocumented alien students.

Item 9. Please comment briefly on any perceived advantages, disadvantages, benefits, or problems resulting from having undocumented alien students attending your college. Some fifteen colleges provided responses to this item. Representative of the ideas expressed are the following examples.

> From California: "I am philosophically opposed to allowing them to attend as resident students when they are not even in the country legally. Some documented aliens found it was to their advantage to be undocumented and actually lied to us saying they were in the country illegally and thus avoided paying nonresident tuition."

From California: "[Our] college provides education to a group of people who often need vocational and academic training to a greater extent than other groups."

From California: "Most are from poor families and can't pay the tuition. The impact of refugee students is the real problem today. The federal government brought the students here and the state must educate them. Undocumented alien problem is minor in this part of the country."

From Minnesota: "Sometimes they are hard to understand. Otherwise no major disadvantages, benefits, or advantages have been seen in having alien students in attendance. Most of them seem to be above average student clientele."

From Missouri: "Biggest problem with any foreign student is our lack of special services. Numbers and costs do not justify additions of services which are really needed by the students."

From North Carolina: "Mountains of paperwork and red tape!"

From Oklahoma: "Poor academic record documentation makes class placement difficulty. Poor language skills make main-streaming difficult for these students and other students enrolled in the class."

Summary

This study, which is among the very few -- if not the only one to date -- to attempt to determine the impact of undocumented alien students upon the nation's two-year colleges, yielded a surprising and unanticipated finding to the researcher. That finding was that two-year colleges do not always know if undocumented alien students

are enrolled. Even though 95 per cent of the respondents to the survey instrument indicated that undocumented alien students were not allowed to enroll in their colleges, the information provided by the 5 per cent of the respondents who indicated that they did not know if undocumented alien students were enrolled causes one to question whether or not such students are actually enrolled in many two-year colleges without their presence being known by college officials. A quote from a respondent in Arkansas supports such a questioning: "[It is] likely that undocumented aliens are enrolled and that they list themselves both as residents of U.S. and of our service area -- as a result we cannot tell who they are." A respondent from New Mexico supports the stated concern: "At the present time we do not require a student to respond to citizenship status. We may have undocumented aliens enrolled, but unlikely." A similar response comes from Connecticut: "The College lacks a mechanism to determine a student's citizenship status as a routine part of the admissions process." And finally, a statement from a respondent in Illinois seems to support the researcher's conclusion that the impact of undocumented alien students upon the two-year colleges in the nation may be unable to be assessed: "___ Community College does not check immigration status. Residency in the district is the deciding factor."

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